

Family meeting

- Amos 3:1-8
- Whenever I would yell up the stairs, “Family meeting!” years ago, before any of our seven children had run away from home, it would sometimes strike them with fear. Or at least uncertainty. Hey, sometimes I just wanted to tell them we were going to get ice cream, and to pile into the car. But sometimes, maybe more often than not, it was because there was an issue that we, the parents, needed to discuss with them, the ones who were NOT the parents. And sometimes there would be punishment of some kind attached to the end of that discussion, if not to the ends of our children. Why did Cindy and I do that, have the meeting, discuss the issue, provide the discipline for it? Because we were called by God to do that for our children. Why did the children come downstairs when they heard the call, and not figure out a way to escape from a front bedroom window? Because those windows were on the 2nd floor, and their mama didn’t raise no fools! No, because they were subject to us for their own good and for the glory of God. Their calling from God was just as clear as our calling from God. My job as a father was to say, “Listen to me,” get their full attention, and speak what they needed to hear. Their job was to listen and to respond to their father in an appropriate manner.
- Last week we saw the beginning of God’s judgment on Israel, spoken through Amos, in the 8th century B.C. Today, that judgment continues, and God holds a family meeting in the living room for all the people of Israel. His first words, when they are all assembled and looking attentively into His eyes are this: “Hear this word that the Lord has spoken!” That’s where it all starts, doesn’t it, saints? Hearing the Word that the Lord has spoken. But what enables us to hear the Word of the Lord when most on the earth cannot hear it? Or cannot hear it with acceptance? Paul wrote, “The natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14) Such an important truth that helps us understand why we are swimming upstream in a culture that cannot even begin to understand why. We are not natural men and women, because of the transforming grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are spiritual men and women, and therefore we can accept and can understand the Word of the Lord. Because we belong to the Lord. Let’s look at this text today under these two headings: God, the Father and God, the roaring Lion.
- **God, the Father**
- Sometimes, you just need to know who you’re dealing with. We saw some of this last week in verses 9-11 of chapter 2, and God again reminds them of who He is.
- **He is the Father who adopted us.** Verse 1, “the whole family.” The Gospel is fully on display in an adoption, like we saw yesterday with Zoey Heafner. Nathan and Julie brought her into their home and into their hearts, and into their family. She is a Heafner now, with all the rights and privileges that go along with that. They chose her. In the same way, God chose Israel. He adopted the nation as His own, and it was not because of them, it was because of Him.
- Here’s what God said to them through Moses in Deuteronomy 7: “For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. ⁹ Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations. (Deut. 7:6-9) Do you understand, then, that you have been adopted by the Father? Not only that...

- **He is the Father who delivered us.** “I brought (you) up out of the land of Egypt.” Did any of you get yourself out of darkness, out of slavery, out of sin? Did anybody here revive himself when you were DEAD in those trespasses and sins? No, only God can do that. Again, He chooses to do that, not because of one shred of goodness He sees in us, but because HE is good. All the time. And because He loves us!
- **He is the Father who walks with us.** Verse 2: “You only have I known of all the families of the earth.” He adopted us, and delivered us, and walks with us! He is to us what we are to be to our spouses: the only lover, the closest companion, the best friend. And though we all fall short in how we love our spouse, God never falls short in how He loves us.
- **He is the Father who punishes us.** Wait, What? I thought He was our closest companion! I thought we were the elect, the ones God chose before the foundation of the world and set His heart to rescue us from sin, death, and the grave. That’s right! He did all of that, and made it possible through the death of His only Son on the cross. Douglas Stuart writes, “The full weight of this logic is assumed, not stated. 1. You and I are uniquely covenantally bound. 2. By the terms of our covenant, it is your responsibility to obey and mine to punish you if you do not. 3. I – no one else - am therefore the one to punish you for your sins.” Part of Amos’ ministry is to dispel the foolish and unbiblical notion that God will always protect and always benefit His people, and never bring them harm, or even discomfort! You see, God was dealing with prosperity theology way back in 760 B.C.!
- **God, the roaring Lion**
- In verses 3-6, we hear God’s closing argument in the court case God vs. the People of Israel. By the way, if you are ever in a court case against God, plead guilty. But it is interesting how God sets this up. He asks 7 questions in these 4 verses, one that is by itself, and three pairs. Seven rhetorical questions, and for each one, the answer is clearly, NO.
- We have to LISTEN carefully whenever God asks us a question. And then we need to THINK carefully when we respond. **Here’s the pastor, not God, asking a question. _____, spell silk....**
- Also, each question presents a cause-effect argument, with the effect first, followed by the cause. For example, in verse 3: the effect is that two are walk together. The cause is that they agreed to meet for that purpose. By the way, how is this verse often used? To support unity! I have done it myself. We say, “We need to agree as a church on the vision God has given us, because can two walk together unless they agree?” The KJV translates this, “Can two walk together unless they are agreed?” But the ESV is more complete, because the word for agree in the Hebrew, when it is constructed the way it is here, means, “agree to an appointed time or place.” Can 200 worship together, then, unless we have agreed to meet? It’s less about unity of purpose there and more about showing up at the appointed time and at the appointed place! Which brings me to a discussion about punctuality on Sunday morning.... NO!
- Verse 4, a couplet, two questions, same meaning. Effect: lions roar & lion cubs cry out. Cause: they have taken their prey. Lions hunt quietly, but eat victoriously! Amos would have known all about lions, since he was a shepherd. He didn’t want to hear that roar. By the way, this is a set up for verse 8, when God says that HE has roared.
- Verse 5, a couplet, two questions, same meaning. Effect: bird is trapped & snare is sprung. Cause: trap was set. What is the bait that is set for man, even by our own hearts? Sin! Each of us is caught in it, to our destruction. Unless! **Psalm 124:6-8.** Our hope and our help is in the Lord.
- Verse 6, first question. Effect: trumpet sounds. Cause: the city is under attack. The usual fate of a besieged city in ancient days, was disaster. That’s why the trumpet sound struck fear into the hearts of the people. That’s why the final trumpet sound, when the heavens are rolled back like a scroll and the Lord descends with a shout, will also strike fear, terror!, into the heart of every person on earth who does not know God and who does not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.
- Verse 6, second question: this is the point of the seven rhetorical questions. Does disaster come to a city, a nation, a people group, unless the Lord’s hand is not in it? God asks Israel, “Do you really think that

God would never punish you, even though you deserve it?” Or to ask it another way, “Do you think that almighty God is not just?” He is perfectly just. That is why judgment is coming. But, He is also perfectly loving and merciful. That’s what we see in verse 7. **Read it.**

- Does God act without warning? No. When God brought destruction in the Old Testament, He told His prophets. He did not tell them because He had to. Neither did God tell them because He needed them. He chose to do so, because of His own mercy. Notice that they, the prophets, were His servants. They did not have a message of their own. What the prophets said came from God and was therefore absolutely true. Their job was to speak His words. The final question in verse 8 speaks to this: “The Lord God has spoken; who can but prophesy?” Cause: the Lord God spoke. Effect: the prophets prophesied. What happened when prophets tried to keep God’s message to themselves? **Jeremiah 20:7-9**
- There are no more prophets in this category, who speak only the words of God, with no error, no words of their own mixed it. The closest thing we have today, I believe, is found in those who are called by God to preach the Gospel. I think this is what Paul was getting at when he wrote this: “For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” 1 Corinthians 9:16
- The final question, then, is for EACH of us. Verse 8a. “The lion has roared; who will not fear?” The true prophet of ancient days could no more ignore God’s Word than sensible people today can ignore the roar of a lion. If you are on the African plains, walking by yourself, and suddenly a lion roars in your ear, I guarantee you will not be able to ignore it. You will have to deal with that truth, as it has its way with you. How much more must we listen carefully when God speaks? And think carefully before we respond? And walk carefully on the path that God has called us to?
- Prayer